

Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Center
Offices of the Dean of Student Life
GLBT Mentorship Program
Spring 2018

Background

The Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender Resource Center (GLBT Resource Center) has been part of the Offices of the Dean of Student Life since September 2007. The mission for the GLBT Resource Center, according to its website (<http://studentlife.tamu.edu/glbtc>), is:

The GLBT Resource Center serves as a resource and referral center for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Aggies and their straight supporters. The Center educates all campus and community constituencies on GLBT issues through programming about sexual orientation and gender identity/expression, advocacy, leadership, and visibility. The GLBT Resource Center also collaborates with student organizations, campus departments, and local community organizations to provide students with access to resources, activities, and support services.

The GLBT Resource Center Mentorship program offers support and guidance to lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer or questioning students (LGBTQ) within Texas A&M University. In 2016, this program was awarded a Division of Student Affairs College Completion Grant, intending to sharpen its focus on retention, persistence, and graduation of students involved in the program. By connecting these students with a mentor who is like them, the Mentorship program proposes that its student participants will gain efficacy in persisting to graduation at Texas A&M University. The program outcomes were as follows:

- Create tangible support systems for students through interactions with faculty and staff in a mentoring capacity.
- Enhance the dialogue around LGBTQ+ student support amongst faculty and staff.
- Generate a sense of community for LGBTQ+ faculty and allies.
- Of the students who participate in the mentorship program, 90% will be retained in the program from the active mentorship year to the next full academic year.

Student Life Studies (SLS) and the GLBT Resource Center worked together to assess this mentorship program after its initial launch in the 2013-2014 academic year; this is the fifth time SLS has assisted assessing the program.

Methods and Sample

The electronic survey was produced using Qualtrics®, survey design software that creates web-based forms and databases. The six- question survey contained three quantitative and three qualitative questions and sent to mentors and mentees who participated in the program during the 2017-2018 academic year. The survey began distribution on April 26, 2018 and up to three reminders were sent to those who had not completed the survey before it closed May 11, 2018. Of the 78 individuals who received the assessment, 29 responded yielding a response rate of 37%, higher than last year's response rate of 34%. Responses from mentors and mentees represented 66% and 34% of the survey responses, respectively, which differs from last year's 58% and 42% respectively. Furthermore, 29% of the 40 mentees participating in the program responded to the survey, equal to the percentage who responded to last year's survey.

Collected data was analyzed using SPSS®, a statistical software package, and Microsoft Excel®. Due to branching technology, not all participants of the survey saw all questions.

Results

Results will be reported as means, standard deviation (sd), and frequency percentages for the number of people (n) who responded to the questions. For ease of reading, frequency percentages have been rounded to nearest whole percent, so totals may not add up to exactly 100%. Comparisons to last year's survey data are shown where appropriate. Summary themes are contained in this report; the entire list of qualitative responses can be found in a separate document.

When asked if they would be willing to participate in the Mentorship program again in future years, 29 responded, and 76% answered yes, 14% answered "no, I am graduating or leaving Texas A&M" and 10% answered "no, not interested." In comparison, last year 67% answered yes, 21% answered "no, not interested" and 12% answered "no, I am graduating or leaving Texas A&M." Respondents who answered yes were asked why they were willing to participate again. Mentees who answered indicated they would participate again because they enjoyed the experience, found it helpful to have someone to ask questions of and confide in and they want see the program continue and grow. The mentors who responded noted they were willing to participate again because of their positive experience with the program, committed to supporting the LGBTQ student community at Texas A&M University, and valued the program and its mission.

Those respondents who indicated "no, not interested" when asked if they would be willing to participate in the Mentorship program again in future years, were asked to explain why they were not willing to participate again. Three mentees responded, and mentioned a poor match with their mentor or not having met with their mentor as the reasons they would not participate again. No mentors responded to the questions.

Next, respondents were asked to provide feedback about what the most beneficial aspect of the Mentorship program was for them. Twenty-two responded, and about one-third were mentees. The mentees who responded indicated being able to be themselves, not feeling so isolated and connecting with others because of the safe space the program offered was most beneficial for them. Mentors mentioned meeting with their mentee, helping them develop and connect, enriching their own experience with the program. One mentor said they appreciated the excellent mentee match (in academic and career interest) and another indicated learning about the modern ways with LGBT students struggle with discrimination and ignorance as the most beneficial aspect of the program.

The mentees who responded to the survey were asked if participating in the Mentorship program had influenced how they felt as an LGBTQ person at Texas A&M. Of the 10 mentees who responded, 40% agreed, 40% were neutral about whether the Mentorship program had influenced how they felt and 20% or one mentee strongly disagreed. None chose strongly agreed or disagreed (mean=3.0/5.0, sd=1.16). Last year's 14 respondents were more agreeable that the program had influenced how they felt (mean=3.29/5.0, sd=.91).

The mentors who responded to the survey were asked if participating in the Mentorship program had enhanced their feeling of community at Texas A&M as an LGBTQ person or Ally. Of the 19 mentors who responded, 42% agreed, 37% strongly agreed and 16% were neutral about the program enhancing their feeling of community at Texas A&M as an LGBTQ person or Ally. Additionally, 5% disagreed with the statement and none strongly disagreed with it (mean=4.11/5.0, sd=.88). Response from 19 mentors last year were similar (mean=4.05/5.0, sd=.91).

The list of 2016-2017 mentees and mentors sent the 2017 survey and the list of 2017-2018 mentees and mentors sent the 2018 survey were compared to identify those who participated both years. Four common mentee participants were found, so of the 49 mentees listed as participants in 2016-2017, 8% participated as a mentee in 2017-2018 as well. When comparing mentors from these lists, eight of the 49 2016-2017 program mentors (16%) continued in that role. One mentee from 2016-2017 was found on the list as a 2017-2018 mentor as well.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Over three-quarters of participants, responding to the survey indicated they would continue participating in the GLBT Mentorship program, higher than the amount who agreed to do so last year. Both mentees and mentors found the program beneficial in enhancing mentees' connections and feeling of safety on campus. However, when comparing last year's and this year's list of participants, much fewer actually continued their participation in the program than the survey results indicated. As the GLBT Resource Center staff begins recruiting for the 2018-2019 year program they may want to reach out to those who do not return and ask about the barriers for not doing so and address them, if possible.

Fewer mentee respondents said the Mentorship program influenced how they felt as an LGBTQ person at Texas A&M compared to the previous year's respondents. As the survey did not include inquiry as to why or why not, results do not indicate a reason for the decrease. In addition, the learning outcomes developed for the participants were not assessed here. The GLBT Resource Center staff is encouraged to review the opportunities provided during or after programs or events targeting mentees' progress towards developing those outcomes, and create and implement assessment of those outcomes during or immediately after those programs or events. If the program intends to continue addressing its influence regarding how mentees feel as an LGBTQ person at Texas A&M University and a survey is again used to assess the program participants' experience, it is recommended a follow-up question be added to clearly understand mentees feelings on the subject.

Center Staff is encouraged to read all qualitative responses to gain a fuller understanding of the themes presented in this report. The GLBT Resource Center is also encouraged to share results throughout the department, as other areas may be able to support the program through additional programming and marketing efforts.

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